



# Accident Investigation

An accident can be defined as an unplanned, unexpected or unwanted event resulting in death, injury, ill health or damage. There is a moral and legal duty, notwithstanding strong business case benefits to investigating the circumstances of accidents. Effective accident investigation is an essential part of any serious Health and Safety management system and will be a central component of any civil claim or criminal enforcement action.

All accidents and near miss events should be investigated following a 4 point principle:-

1. Gather information
2. Analyse information and establish causes
3. Identify “reasonably practicable” risk control measures
4. Devise and implement an action plan

The following principles will improve an organisations accident management and help achieve a timely resolution of civil claims.

## BEST PRACTISE

- Devise, document and implement a policy and procedure for accident investigation.
- Identify and train individuals in investigative techniques and report writing.
- Secure the scene and commence investigations as soon as possible.
- Record relevant physical facts such as weights, distances, dimensions, light etc.
- Photograph the scene prior to moving evidence.
- Identify witnesses quickly and immediately take statements. Include neutral statements such as “I did not see anything” as well as eye witness accounts.
- Gather documentation such as accident book entry, RIDDOR report, pre accident risk assessment, written safe working procedure, training records, witness statements, photographs, hazard data sheets, maintenance/service records, correspondence with enforcing authorities, Health & Safety committee minutes & CCTV recordings etc.
- Record facts only. Clearly identify what is speculation, hear say or opinion. Avoid “inappropriate” language and comments.
- Analyse the information and identify conclusions to the questions, why did it happen, how did it happen and how can it be prevented in future. Consider immediate, underlying and root causes.
- Record and implement the findings following hierarchical principles.
- Carry out a post accident risk assessment.
- Assign corrective actions to individuals with timescales for completion.
- Communicate improvements and additional risk control measures to the workforce.
- Where appropriate, take disciplinary action.
- In event of a fatality, serious injury or prosecution risk, inform QBE immediately and seek legal advice from a QBE nominated solicitor.
- Appoint a media spokesman.

## LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to plan, organise, control; monitor and review their health and safety arrangements. Accident investigation forms an essential part of this process.

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 requires notification of specified incidents, injuries and reportable diseases to an enforcing authority.

## GUIDANCE/USEFUL INFORMATION

Investigating accidents and incidents – a workbook for employers, union safety reps and safety professionals, HSG245 ISBN 0 7176 2827